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ORGI chamber of
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Scrutiny Turning CIA Into Better Agency, Turner Says

BY ED SYLVESTER
Times Staff Writer

CIA Director Adm. Stansfield Turner said here Tuesday that increased scrutiny of the agency and the "new openness" forced by the public's loss of faith in it are leading to a better, more American organization.

Turner told a luncheon audience that CIA leaders now can be more confident of difficult policy decisions because increased oversight by other branches of government has lessened the danger of wrong decisions made by "insiders" in a single organization.

While noting the added risk of leaks or overmanagement inherent in adding new supervision, Turner said the "benefits definitely outweigh the risks," and the CIA is becoming a "distinctly, uniquely American" brand of intelligence-gathering agency.

Turner said the presidentially appointed oversight board, the President and vice president and new congressional committees are effective surrogates for the public in judging the correctness of CIA actions.

"And this oversight gives us in the intelligence community the feeling that we're on the right track and accountable for what we're doing. It's easy to get carried away by zeal or dedication when you don't have that independent judgment of your decisions," he said.

Turner addressed a joint meeting of the Chamber of Commerce and the Kiwanis Club at the El Cortez Hotel.

Asked about possible involvement of the CIA in the misdeeds of other countries' secret police agencies, Turner said the CIA "is scrupulous that when we have liaisons" with another nation's security agency, it only concerns information on a third nation.

Turner was asked the question because Chilean secret police have been linked to the 1976 assassination in Washington of Orlando Letelier, former ambassador to the United States.

Turner said any contacts between Chilean intelligence services and the CIA would only involve "information we would want on some third country. We would not have helped them in creating internal security functions."

Turner said that Letelier's assassination would have to be considered

internal even though it occurred in Washington and would be investigated by the FBI as a murder committed on U.S. soil.

He said that even in training or instructing foreign police agencies, the CIA would draw the line at enabling the agencies to more effectively gather information on other countries "in which we have an interest" and would not aid in setting up internal security.

Turner said he had no knowledge that the CIA had any relation at all with the Chilean police — "I'm too new on the (intelligence) team" — but that the policy would apply to any foreign spy agency.

Turner told the luncheon audience of 650 that the CIA began with a single-minded mission of monitoring the Soviet military, seen as the primary threat to the United States.

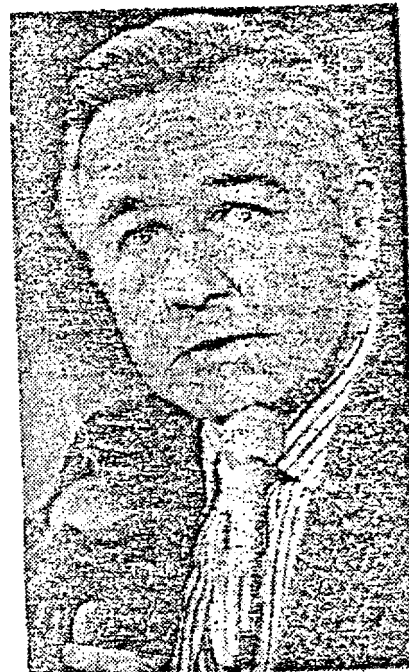
"Now America has legitimate concerns with the more than 150 nations in the world. But our concerns are more economic and political than military," he said.

Following this increased sophistication in America's relations with the world, the CIA has had to broaden its intelligence gathering to include economic and political forecasts — while still keeping up with the Soviet military threat, he said.

In addition, the modern CIA agent has to learn to operate in the "new climate of openness" and in a world where increasing technological advances have to be balanced with the "human evaluation" of information.

Electronic surveillance tends to "tell you what was happening yesterday," he said. "We need to know why it was happening and what will happen tomorrow. The forte of the traditional agent is people's intentions."

In response to questions from the audience, Turner said he believes the rift between Russia and China is "very strong, very deep, both ideological and practical."



Adm. Stansfield Turner
Times photo

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